

The founding of a Nursing institution has too often served one of two purposes: either as a means of personal aggrandisement and profit for the promoter, or a means of cheap philanthropy for well-meaning busybodies, who, in point of fact, have practised the "sweating system," and used the hard-earned wages of a poorly-paid profession to make charitable doles in any direction that suited them, and for which they alone have reaped the credit. This latter system is manifestly wrong, and is all the more to be condemned because it is carried on under the cloak of Charity. For I have belonged to institutions (and others here have doubtless done the same) where the profits of the Nurses' work have been applied to feed the poor in the neighbouring districts. This is undeniably in itself a very excellent purpose, and if people are pleased to do it with their own money all honour to them, but I do most earnestly contend that they are not entitled to underpay and overwork Nurses for this or any other scheme of vicarious benevolence. The other purpose to my mind is much more defensible. It is simply a matter of business. Capital offers to Labour regular employment, regular wages, and a more or less comfortable home when unemployed, and very naturally expects as large a return as possible for the money expended. If Labour accepts these terms a straightforward commercial contract is made, and nothing can be said against it. But I would raise the question, is this the best possible arrangement for Nurses, for Medical men, or even for the public? and I unhesitatingly answer in the negative. To the unprofessional individual, who conducts a Nursing Institution as he would manage any other kind of business, it is of course a matter of perfect indifference what the general standard of knowledge and efficiency of his employées may be, so long as their character and conduct prove on the whole satisfactory to his clients. And besides this, being ignorant of Nursing matters himself, he is obliged to engage his Staff largely upon appearances—which it is proverbial are deceptive—or upon testimonials, which all experience proves are, if possible, still more misleading. And so has arisen the evil from which Trained Nurses have for so long suffered, that anyone possessed of a little capital can open a Private Nursing Institution, and is obliged by no law or necessity to select well-trained Nurses to fill it. Judicious expenditure in advertising is the secret of success, and the public will confidently rush to his Home in their emergencies, and welcome any female in cap and apron whom he is pleased to send to them. If she proves unsatisfactory it is quite easy for him to apologise and send another who may be more successful. If the case is a simple one and

the woman takes a little trouble to please, great is the satisfaction of everyone, and great the credit to the Home. And this state of things is surely bad for Doctors. We all know that it is almost impossible for a busy man coming in once or twice a day for a few minutes to judge whether we are faithfully carrying out the instructions he has given us; whether, in fact, we even understood them at all, whether we have charted the pulse and temperature correctly, or given the diet or medicine at proper times, and in right quantities. But suppose that by good fortune the Doctor discovers an attendant to be grossly careless or utterly ignorant, and sends her away, how little effect his action will probably have upon the Manager of the Nursing Home, or upon the woman herself, both being in a state of frivolous irresponsibility. How grave a danger is implied to the sick public in this state of affairs I need not point out.

So I would in the first place venture to lay down a distinct proposition:—That it is essential for the protection of the public, and for the benefit of Medical men, that there should be some central authority to whom every Private Nurse should be responsible, to whom she could be reported, and by whom she could be suspended from work in case of grave dereliction of duty.

(To be continued.)

NURSING ECHOES.

*** Communications (duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith) are especially invited for these columns.*

I HEAR from official sources that the British Nurses' Association has made a new and most important departure in its work. Miss Foggo-Thomson, in the Paper which she recently read before that body, suggested that it might be useful to Nurses were an exhibition of the most recent Nursing appliances and inventions constantly open for their inspection. The proposal appears to have been received with marked approval by those who were present at the Meeting, and apparently has now been adopted and amplified by the Executive Committee of the Association, because I learn that "one of the rooms at the Offices of the Association is being fitted up to receive many new dressings and inventions already promised by leading manufacturers for



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